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ABSTRACT

As part of the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Evaluation Collaboration, responses from extension professionals in 42 states and territories to the 74-item Organizational Change Survey were analyzed. Overall trends in the discrepancy between the current and ideal status of extension as indicated by all state discrepancy scores in all 42 states for all 34 relevant items indicated respondents wanted to do more, not less, with CYFAR; in 20 states, all discrepancy scores were in the desired direction, and all differences between current and ideal scores were statistically significant. Survey results organized by six components of organizational change as conceptualized in CYFAR indicated that: (1) most professionals work from a personal strategic plan that addresses CYFAR programming; (2) about half the states reported that their state vision is congruent with the national one and have a commitment to CYFAR; (3) most states report strong support from supervisors and their campus; (4) in nearly all states, more than half of respondents participated in training on the use of computers and electronic communications during the previous 12 months, but few reported using electronic resources; (5) in most states, extension professionals are very knowledgeable of principles of positive development, risk and resilience factors, and programming for at-risk families; (6) extension professionals are being recognized as critical resources in education for children, youth, family, and community issues; (7) Cooperative Extension is fairly active in incorporating diversity; and (8) in all states, at least half the respondents agreed that collaboration with other agencies enhances their experience and credibility and is worth the effort. (Appendixes include information on survey quality and 37 references.) (YLB)

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NATIONAL RESULTS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE SURVEY

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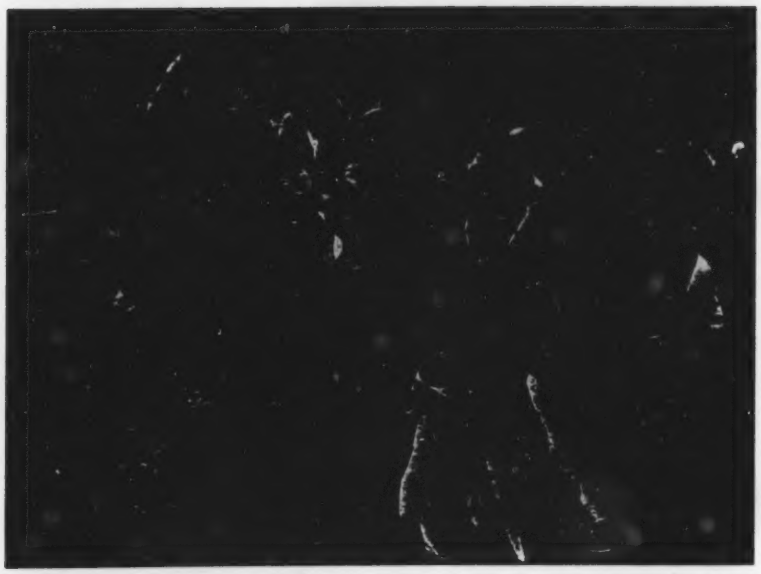

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S CAPACITY TO SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK

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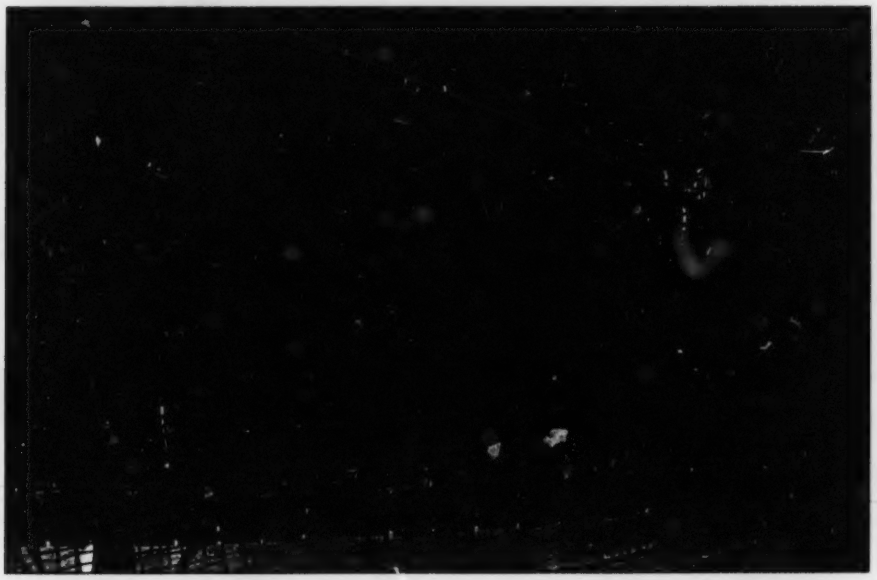
PREFACE

As part of the Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) Evaluation Collaboration, surveys of Extension professionals from 45 states and territories were conducted. This report contains survey results. It provides a snapshot of the state of Extension during late 1997 and early 1998 with regard to its organizational ability to support programming for children, youth and families at risk. Both national and state trends are reported, highlighting some states.

After a brief review of related literature, which provides an organizational context for the survey results and implications, the survey method is presented (survey design, procedure, data entry and analysis). The results are organized in the same manner as the state reports -- by the six components of organizational change as conceptualized in this initiative.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the thousands of individuals who completed this survey, the state coordinators who did all of the work to get the surveys out to their state Extension professionals, the state Extension directors who lent their administrative support and resources, and our federal partners at CSREES who supported this work. A special thank you to Aleta Garcia and Erik Earthman at the University of Arizona for their help in formatting and editing this report. We hope you will find this report of interest and use in your work.



INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Children, Youth and Families At Risk National Initiative is the Cooperative Extension System's response to pervasive conditions in America which place children and their families at risk. Through the CYFAR Initiative, the Extension System makes a commitment to support programs for at-risk youth and families as part of the educational outreach of the Land Grant University system. The mission of the CYFAR Initiative is:

> "The CES is committed to marshal the resources of the Land Grant and Cooperative Extension System to collaborate with other organizations to develop and deliver educational programs that equip limited resource families and youth who are at risk for not meeting basic human needs, to lead positive, productive, contributing lives."

To accomplish this mission, organizational changes are necessary. The CYFAR Evaluation Collaboration has provided a means to help state Extension systems evaluate the current status of their organizations in this area and document future change through the use of the CYFAR Organizational Change Survey. This section gives a brief description of related literature and issues.

RATIONALE FOR EVALUATION

It is important to acknowledge the difficulty of implementing organizational changes. The CYFAR Initiative involved a significant expansion of constituencies for Cooperative Extension nationally. It is said that while the Extension system continued to do an exemplary job of serving traditional constituencies, it also recognized changes that have taken place across the nation in both rural and urban areas in recent years by expanding efforts to reach children, youth and families who have not traditionally been served by Extension programs. Cooperative Extension had the knowledge base and the resources to make a significant difference in our communities, but needed to find more effective ways to expand to at-risk audiences, without abandoning more traditional clients. Everyone benefits when the social fabric of our communities remains strong and resilient. Ultimately, if the broader organizational changes have been effective, Extension professionals should feel better equipped and supported in carrying out the program-level goals of the CYFAR Initiative.

The six components of the organizational change outcome (listed below) were keyed to program strategies based on research on effective programs for at-risk children, youth and families (Program Announcement, Children, Youth and Families at Risk RFA Package, 1996).

1. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMMON VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK.
2. TRAIN, SUPPORT AND REWARD EXTENSION SALARIED AND VOLUNTEER STAFF FOR IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS WHICH ACCOMPLISH THE CYFAR MISSION.
3. RECOGNIZE EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS AS CRITICAL RESOURCES IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY ISSUES.
4. PROMOTE DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY AND PLURALISM IN EXTENSION PROGRAMS AND STAFF.
5. PROMOTE [INTERNAL] COLLABORATIONS OF EXTENSION 4-H, FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS IN PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK ACROSS THE STATE.
6. PROMOTE AND JOIN [EXTERNAL] COLLABORATIONS OF COMMUNITY, COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS TO STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS AND POLICY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The mission of Cooperative Extension is grounded in research and the dissemination of research-based knowledge; thus, it is appropriate to turn to the large body of literature on change in trying to assess the implementation and impact of these particular organizational changes. In addition to the contributions of standard works on program evaluation (Jacobs, 1988; King, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Rossi & Freeman, 1993), the academic fields of social psychology and sociology provide general theories of change in relation to individuals and groups, respectively. This work is relevant because system-wide changes in organizations depend in part on changes in the behavior of the individuals and groups within those systems. The unwillingness or inability to change by individual staff members constitutes a significant barrier to organizational change. Individuals also differ in their beliefs and attitudes about the possibility of change. Self-reported behaviors of staff members in community organizations are consistent with the beliefs they express about change, and it is not yet clear whether these beliefs in adults are malleable, or whether they are relatively stable personality traits (Silverberg, Betts, Huebner, & Cota-Robles, 1996). Other individual-level barriers to change can include habit, dependency, fear of the unknown, security and economic factors (Rennekamp & Gerhard, 1992).

At the group level, social exchange theory suggests that groups within an organization will respond to changes in terms of perceptions of power, advantage and disadvantage (Carnall, 1986). Group responses to change can be either passive or active, and may include resistance, opposition, acceptance, ritualistic response, acquiescence and leaving. Carnall (1986) suggests that organizations are effective in initiating change to the extent that advantages to some groups may be pursued without disadvantaging others.

The applied disciplines of management and public administration provide more specific guidance in both assessing organizational effectiveness (Harrison, 1987; Lawler, Nadler, & Cammann, 1980; Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1983; Van de Ven & Ferry, 1980) and managing and evaluating organizational transitions (Beckhard & Harris, 1987; Legge, 1984; Luthy, 1993). Earlier interest in normative processes of organizational change and development (Beer, 1980; Burke, 1987) has more recently given rise to studies of "organizational learning" (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Leeuw, Rist, & Sonnichsen, 1994; Popper & Lipschitz, 1998; Simon, 1991). The extent to which an organization "learns" is thought to be related to both structural factors (mechanisms and procedures that allow organizations to systematically collect, disseminate, and use information) and cultural factors (including shared professional values, leadership, and vision). A related issue is the role of evaluation in organizational "learning." The process of conducting an evaluation can itself, under some circumstances, help to promote desired changes in organizational structure or culture (Fein, Staff, & Kobylenski, 1993; Forss, Cracknell, & Samset, 1994; Thompson, 1990).

In interpreting and evaluating the organizational changes in the Extension System in relation to the CYFAR Initiative, a particularly useful concept is the idea of an organizational niche. According to Zammuto (1982), the concept of organizational effectiveness is tied to the ideas of social and political legitimacy. Effectiveness is defined as "the degree to which an organization is satisfying broad sets of preferences for performance, as defined by the organization's constituencies" (p. 4). These constituent preferences, as well as social needs and constraints, are evolving, not static, so effective organizations are those that evolve along with the larger society. Over time, effective organizations satisfy constituent preferences through niche expansion, a process which may involve expansion to include new constituencies. Organizational evaluation models need to be flexible enough to provide management with enough information about these contextual changes to inform managerial decision making. There are public policy implications as well, since an organization that fails to recognize qualitative changes in public preferences will eventually lose public confidence and legitimacy.

Niche expansion seemed to be an accurate description of Cooperative Extension's position at the time of the CYFAR Initiative. The CYFAR Initiative and State Strengthening Projects reflected recognition by strategic planners of changes in the societal context that required some changes in the system, and in the ways that it is evaluated (Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 1994; 4-H National Strategic Business Plan, 1991; Home Economics Sub-Committee, ECOP, 1990; Sadowske & Adrian, 1990; Search Institute, 1993; Strategic Directions of the Cooperative Extension System, 1990; Strategic Planning Council, ECOP, 1990). While the organization apparently continued to satisfy its traditional constituents, that constituency may be shrinking as a proportion of the U.S. population. Thus, a larger group was not yet benefitting fully from the resources of Cooperative Extension. To the extent that there was a mixed reception within the system to these changes, it may be partly due to the fact that in some areas, the old niche was still a comfortable fit, while in others it was not. Such diversity of experience has added richness to the organization, but may also have complicated the process of developing and communicating a shared vision at all levels (horizontally and vertically) in the system.

The concept of niche is also relevant to discussions of collaboration both within and outside of the Extension system. Research in the area of inter- and intra-organizational relations provides valuable insight into the processes of internal and external collaboration. Alter and Hage (1995) hypothesize that inter-orgnizational collaboration varies along the dimensions of: 1) competition vs. symbiotic cooperation, 2) number of organizations involved, and 3) level of cooperation. When organizations compete directly for the same resources and clientele (that is, occupy the same niche or service sector), they are less likely to collaborate effectively than if they occupy more complementary or symbiotic niches. Organizational networks with many members find it more difficult to coordinate and cooperate than do networks of two or three members. Networks that involve exchanges of information, money or materials are simpler and require less coordination than networks that involve "joint production" of a product or service, which requires much more complex and higher level integration. While these hypotheses refer to inter-organizational collaboration efforts, it seems plausible that they could also apply to different departments or units within a large system such as Cooperative Extension. Alter and Hage (1995) suggest that a brief assessment of these network parameters is helpful in designing evaluations of inter- or intra-organizational relations, since this may help avoid setting unrealistic performance criteria. Based on this work, the Organizational Change Survey includes "performance gap" measures designed to tap into the gap between how effective the system is in actual practice, and how effective it could be given these constraints (Alter & Hage, 1995).

METHOD

SURVEY DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The Organizational Change Survey is loosely based on the national agent surveys conducted by the Search Institute in 1993 and 1996 to evaluate the National 4-H Council's Strengthening Our Capacity to Care (SOCC) Project. The SOCC surveys assessed the successes and challenges experienced in reaching youth and families at risk. The 74-item Organizational Change Survey covers topics ranging from the implementation of common vision to training opportunities, collaboration within and outside Extension, diversity of Extension programs and staff, respondent characteristics, and program sustainability. Issues of validity and reliability are covered in a separate section at the end of this report.

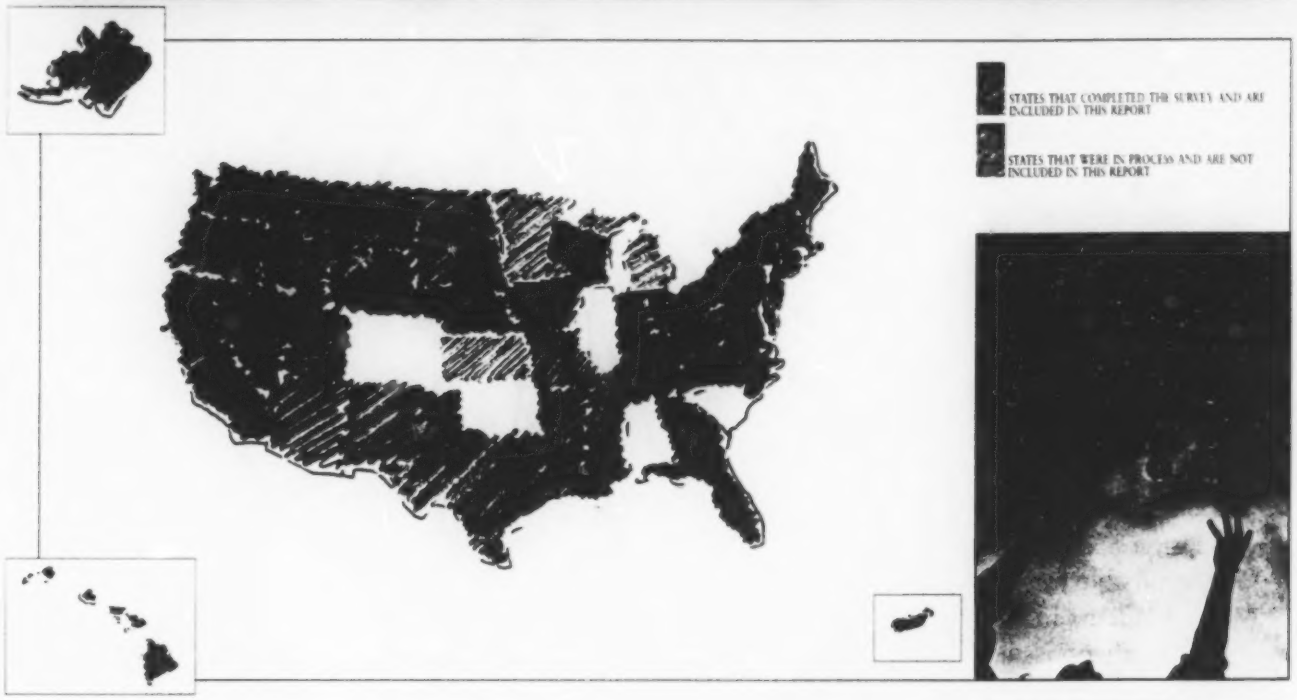
A packet containing a camera-ready copy of the Organizational Change Survey, implementation procedures and disk copies of supporting documents was sent to each state Extension director. Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method was utilized as a framework for this survey. Each state was responsible for selecting participants and implementing the survey. Eligible respondents included all paid Extension professionals who work directly or indirectly on issues related to children, youth and families. Individuals in nonpaid positions and Extension professionals who work primarily on other issues were excluded. All responses, identified only by code numbers, were returned to Arizona for analysis.

DATA ENTRY AND ANALYSIS

Initial data entry was performed with the use of a computer software program that allows a scanner to read filled-in bubbles directly from a survey and convert them to numbers for statistical analysis. Each state's data were saved in a separate file. These files were then aggregated for statistical analyses for the national report. Thus, in the analyses, each state served as an individual case.

Within each component, an overall picture of the status of Extension is presented. In other words, national trends are discussed. A table is included for each component which displays the quartile ranges of state percentages, means, and standard deviations for various items. Those states in the top quartile in each area are then characterized. The top quartile refers to the top 25% of responses. The second and third quartiles refer to responses falling between the 51st-75th, and the 26th-50th percentages, respectively. The bottom quartile refers to the bottom 25% of responses. Please note that the section on Respondent Characteristics includes data at both the state and individual level of analysis. However, all data presented for Components 1 through 6 refer to states rather than individual respondents.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS


STATES THAT COMPLETED THE SURVEY AND ARE INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT
STATES THAT WERE IN PROCESS AND ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

Forty-five states completed the CYFAR Organizational Change Survey. The forty-two states that completed the survey between September 1997 and July 1998 are included this report. Three states were still in process at the time of this writing and thus are not included in this report: Kansas, Michigan, and Minnesota. The map presents a visual display of those states who participated in the Organizational Change Survey.

STATES INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT

Alaska Arizona
Arkansas California
Connecticut Delaware
Florida Georgia Hawaii
Idaho Indiana Iowa
Kentucky Louisiana
Maine Maryland
Massachusetts
Mississippi Missouri
Montana Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico New York
North Carolina
North Dakota Ohio
Oregon Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
South Dakota Tennessee
Texas Utah Vermont
Virginia Washington
West Virginia Wisconsin
Wyoming

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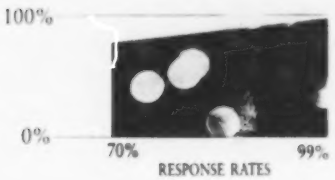
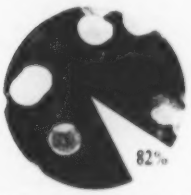
UNIT OF ANALYSIS = 42 STATES



Eligible respondents included all paid Extension professionals in the community, county, region, area and university who work directly or indirectly with children, youth and families. Individuals in nonpaid positions and Extension professionals who work primarily on unrelated issues were excluded. While state reports examined the organizational components based on individual responses within the state, this report will examine differences across states. This means that the 42 participating states are the unit of analysis. Response rates among the 42 states were consistently high, ranging from 70% to 99%. The number of eligible respondents in the states varied with the size of the state Extension staff. The total number of eligible respondents as determined by each of these 42 states varied widely, from a low of 25 to a high of 407. Overall, 4956 individuals out of 6054 returned a completed Organizational Change Survey, resulting in an 82% response rate.

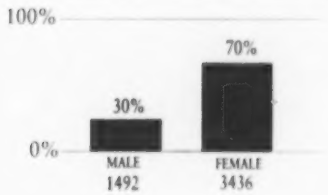
OVERALL RESPONSE RATE



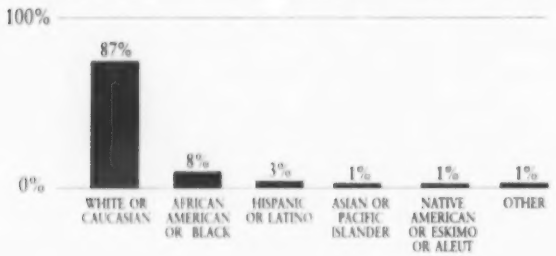
4956 INDIVIDUALS OUT OF 6054
RETURNED A COMPLETED SURVEY

The following characterizes individuals who responded across the 42 states. While the states are the unit of analysis in the remainder of the report, the following individual information provides an interesting snapshot.

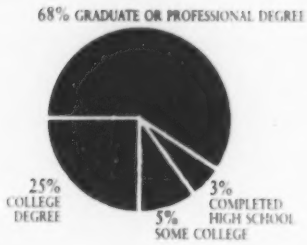
GENDER



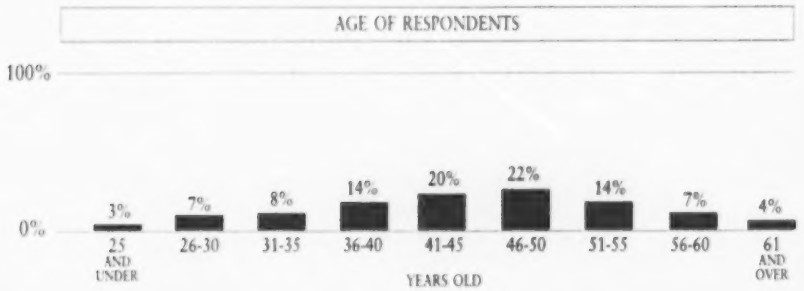
ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENTS



EDUCATION



AGE OF RESPONDENTS



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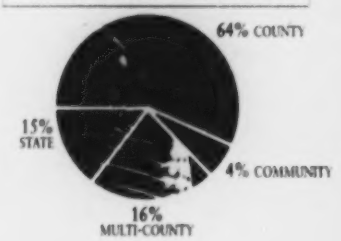
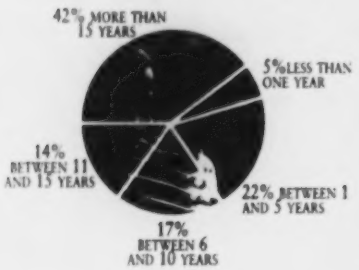
The participants answered several questions about their responsibilities for working with children, youth and families.

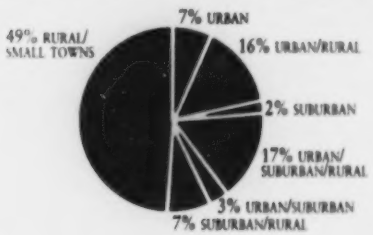
LEVEL OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY



NUMBER OF YEARS EMPLOYED BY EXTENSION FOR PAY

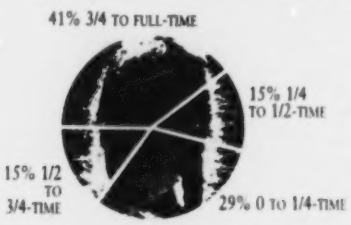


RESPONDENTS REPLY WHEN ASKED TO CHARACTERIZE THEIR EXTENSION PROGRAM

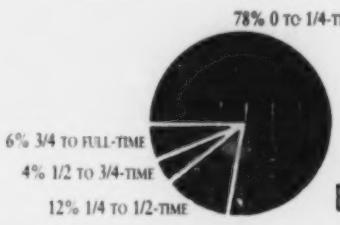


Graphs below display the proportions of assignment devoted to children, youth and family issues and to administration, respectively.

PROPORTIONS OF ASSIGNMENT DEVOTED TO CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY ISSUES



PROPORTIONS OF ASSIGNMENT DEVOTED TO ADMINISTRATION



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OVERALL TRENDS: DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN CURRENT AND IDEAL

Prior to examining the results concerning the six components of organizational capacity, we think it is important to present the overall trends in the discrepancy between the current and ideal status of Extension. These powerful results emphasize the direction of the Extension system development as we work with children, youth and families at risk.

Fifty-five of the 74 survey questions addressed the six components. Of those 55, 34 were asked in such a way that respondents were required to answer twice, once for the current situation and once for the ideal. Discrepancy scores were then calculated for each of these 34 items by subtracting the response to the ideal item from the response to the current item. These discrepancy scores revealed the size and direction of the gap between a respondent's perception of the current and an ideal system.

When the Organizational Change Survey was constructed, the performance gap measures were included for several reasons. First, there was some feeling that some respondents wanted to do less work with children, youth and families at risk, not more. This discrepancy would be revealed. Second, not just the direction of the discrepancy, but the size of the gap would reveal how much work was to be done. Third, these measures were expected to provide a baseline from which progress toward the "ideal" could be measured when the survey is repeated. The results presented here are dramatic.

ALL state discrepancy scores in all 42 states, for ALL 34 items indicated that respondents want to do more, not less with this CYFAR Initiative. Further, in 20 of the 42 states, ALL discrepancy scores were not only in the desired direction, but all differences between the current and ideal scores were statistically significant. Respondents were quite definite in their opinions about how much more should be done:

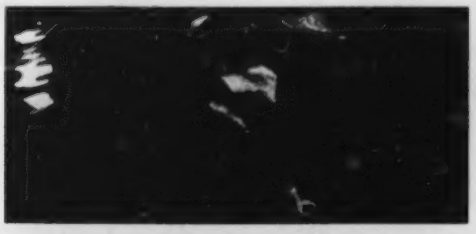
- State Extension systems should articulate a clear vision for CYFAR;
- The state vision should be congruent with the national vision;
- States and individuals should work from strategic plans that address children, youth and families at risk;
- Supervisors should give support for allocation of time and resources;
- Campus-based faculty support is needed;
- More recognition and promotions for outstanding work are needed;
- Staff diversity is critical to the success of CYFAR efforts;
- More staff and volunteers need to be recruited from new audiences;
- Extension needs to work more with diverse populations; and
- More collaboration between Extension and both internal and external partners is needed.

Analysis of the discrepancy scores in the 22 states that had one or more scores that did not differ significantly revealed some interesting patterns. Only eight questions of the 34 possible were found to be involved. Four of them involved the discrepancy between the current and ideal work done with: 1) people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, 2) people from single-parent families, 3) people in low-income families, and 4) people at-risk for problem behavior. We speculate that so much work is currently being done with these populations that the size of the gap between current and ideal is smaller.

The question about the influence of outside groups on the CYFAR work of Extension did not produce significant differences between current and ideal in five states although the direction of all differences indicated more is desired. Three other questions produced similar results in one state each.

Please keep in mind, as you read this report and reflect on the meaning and implications of the results reported for each of the six components, that in all cases what respondents believed to be ideal revealed strong support for strengthening this system in working with children, youth and families at risk. Clearly, the results suggest a need to continue building support for community-based programs for at-risk audiences.

It is important to acknowledge the utility of a shared vision and strategic planning in supporting programs for children, youth and families at risk.



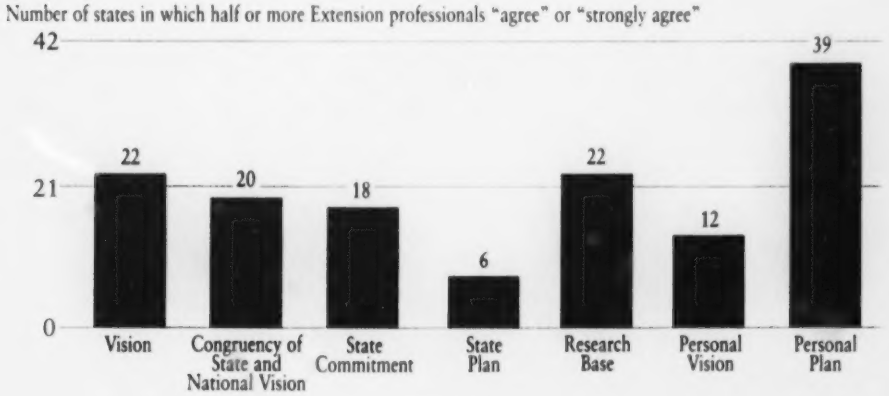
1 COMPONENT

Develop and implement a common vision and strategic plan for programming for children, youth and families at risk.

THIS COMPONENT WAS ADDRESSED BY SEVEN QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. STATES' VISIONS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK;
2. CONGRUENCY OF THE STATES' VISIONS WITH THE NATIONAL VISION;
3. STATEWIDE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK;
4. STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLANS TO EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN CYFAR PROGRAMMING;
5. WHETHER A RESEARCH BASE UNDERGIRDS THEIR CYFAR PROGRAMS;
6. WHETHER RESPONDENTS PERSONALLY HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATE VISION;
7. WHETHER RESPONDENTS PERSONALLY WORK FROM A STRATEGIC PLAN THAT ADDRESSES CYFAR PROGRAMMING GOALS.

SHARED VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING



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THE BIG PICTURE

The figure above shows the number of states in which half or more of the Extension professionals agreed or strongly agreed to each question. Several trends are evident from this data. Most professionals work from a personal strategic plan that addresses CYFAR programming, while few reported having a clear understanding of state plans. It is encouraging that about half the states report that their state vision is congruent with the national vision, that they have a long term commitment to CYFAR, and that they use programs undergirded by existing research.

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A CLOSER LOOK

The percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to each question was computed for each state and then states were divided into quartiles. The table below shows the means, standard deviations and the range of percentages for each quartile. For example, regarding the first variable, an average of 51% agreed or strongly agreed that their states have a clear vision relative to CYFAR. In the top quartile, between 62% and 78% supported this statement. In contrast, only 24% to 38% of respondents in the bottom quartile agreed or strongly agreed that their states have a clear vision.

SHARED VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

Item	Bottom Quartile	Third Quartile	Second Quartile	Top Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
States' Vision	24-38%	39-53%	54-61%	62-78%	51.29	15.24
Congruency of State and National Visions	27-38%	39-47%	48-58%	59-74%	48.95	12.02
Statewide Commitments	16-38%	39-47%	48-55%	56-87%	46.83	14.52
Statewide Strategic Plans	8-24%	25-36%	37-45%	46-73%	36.88	14.99
Research Base	27-45%	46-50%	51-60%	61-80%	51.50	12.77
Respondents' Personal Understanding of State Vision	19-32%	33-42%	43-50%	51-73%	42.14	12.76
Respondents' Personal Work from a Strategic Plan	35-55%	56-64%	65-75%	76-90%	65.45	12.58

*Percent of respondents within each state who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each item. State percentages are included in state reports.

Seven states (Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Nebraska, North Carolina, Puerto Rico and Texas) consistently ranked in the top quartile on at least five of the seven questions. All seven states ranked in the top quartile for questions regarding whether the state had articulated a clear vision relative to CYFAR and whether the state had a long term commitment to programming for CYFAR. When these states did not rank in the top quartile, they usually ranked in the second quartile. None of these states ranked in the bottom quartile on any of the seven questions. These states are characterized by clearly articulated visions which are congruent with the national vision for CYFAR, a long term commitment to CYFAR programming, statewide strategic plans, programming supported by existing research, and employees who under-

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stand the state vision and work from a personal strategic plan. Another striking feature of states doing well in Component 1 is the apparently effective dissemination of information. These states have few respondents who indicated they are "not sure" of the status of the item in their states.

Unfortunately, eight states ranked consistently in the bottom quartile on five of the seven questions. All eight states scored in the bottom quartile on items regarding the states' visions, the congruency of state and national visions, and statewide commitments to CYFAR programming. While few respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the items, many were not sure of the current status of these questions in their states. Good communication relative to CYFAR appears to be critical to the movement of the state organization.

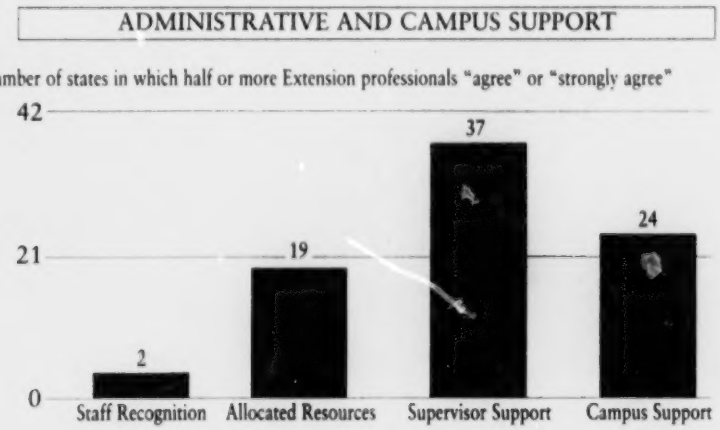
2 COMPONENT

Train, support and reward Extension salaried and volunteer staff for implementing programs which accomplish the CYFAR mission.

Administrative and campus support, availability of and participation in training and the accessibility and utilization of technological resources, including the internet, facilitate Extension professionals' work with children, youth and families at risk.

THIS COMPONENT WAS ADDRESSED BY EIGHT QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION FOR OUTSTANDING WORK AMONG PAID STAFF;
2. STATE EXTENSION ALLOCATION OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES SPECIFICALLY FOR WORK WITH CYFAR;
3. SUPERVISORS' SUPPORT FOR RESPONDENTS' ALLOCATIONS OF TIME AND PRIORITIES TO CYFAR WHEN THERE ARE CONFLICTING DEMANDS;
4. CAMPUS-BASED FACULTY SUPPORT FOR CYFAR EFFORTS;
5. PARTICIPATION IN ELEVEN TRAINING TOPICS;
6. SUFFICIENCY OF TRAINING RECEIVED IN ELEVEN TRAINING TOPICS;
7. OVERALL QUALITY OF TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES;
8. INTERNET USE.



THE BIG PICTURE: ADMINISTRATIVE AND CAMPUS SUPPORT

Figure above shows the number of states in which half or more of the Extension professionals agreed or strongly agreed to each question. Nationally, it is apparent that good work in this area is not being recognized. On the other hand, most states reported strong support from supervisors regarding the allocation of time and priorities when there were conflicting demands. About half were doing well allocating financial resources and giving support from campus-based faculty.

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A CLOSER LOOK: ADMINISTRATIVE AND CAMPUS SUPPORT

To gain another perspective, the percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to each question was computed for each state and then the states were divided into quartiles. Table below shows the means, standard deviations and range of percentages for each quartile. Among states in the top quartile, most reported a great deal of perceived support in all areas, except staff recognition.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND CAMPUS SUPPORT: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

ITEM	BOTTOM QUARTILE	THIRD QUARTILE	SECOND QUARTILE	TOP QUARTILE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Staff Recognition	14-29%	30-34%	35-40%	41-53%	34.57	9.25
Allocated Resources	19-34%	35-47%	48-55%	56-67%	44.55	13.49
Supervisor Support	46-53%	54-60%	61-67%	68-83%	60.81	9.48
Campus Support	12-36%	37-51%	52-67%	68-87%	51.76	18.58

*Percent of respondents within each state who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each item. State percentages are included in state reports.

Two states (Iowa and Wisconsin) consistently ranked in the top quartiles in at least three of the four questions and on the fourth question, missed the top quartile by only one percent. These states demonstrate a high degree of administrative and campus support for CYFAR programming. However, five states ranked in the bottom quartile in at least three of the four questions. These states were in the bottom quartile for allocation of resources and support from campus-based faculty, while some were in the third quartile for staff recognition or supervisors' support. None ranked in the second or top quartile for any item. Four of these five states also ranked consistently low in Component 1 concerning a shared vision and strategic plan.

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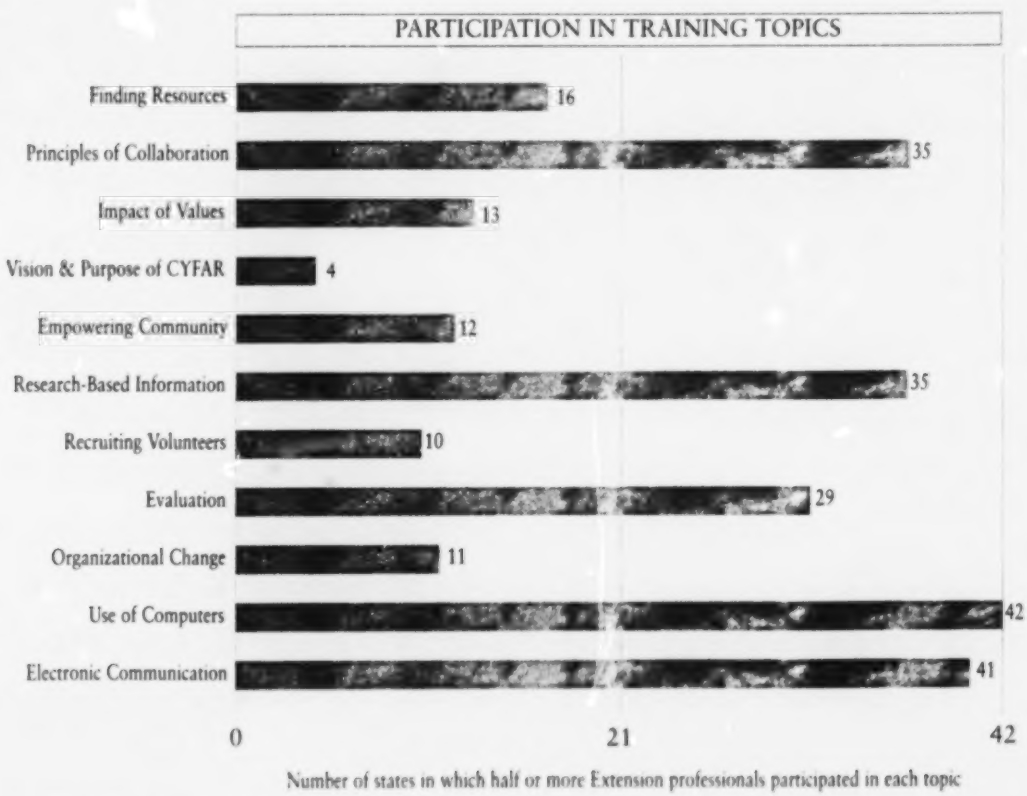
THE BIG PICTURE: TRAINING

Two questions were asked about participation in eleven training topics and about the overall quality of training and staff development experienced in the last 12 months. In some states, more than half the respondents participated in nine or ten of the eleven topics, while in others, more than half participated in between two and five topics. The mean was six. Regarding quality of training, between 55% and 74% of those in the top quartile and between 21% and 40% of those in the bottom quartile responded "good" or "excellent." The national average was 48%. Again, Wisconsin ranked in the top quartile in both of these items. Six states fell into the bottom quartile in both items, indicating both low participation in and low quality of staff training.

Figure below shows the number of states in which over half the respondents reported they participated in each of the eleven topics within the preceding 12 months. Four states reported participation in training on the vision and purpose of the CYFAR Initiative, while 42 and 41 states reported participation in training on the use of computers and the use of electronic communication, respectively. There was considerable variability across the topics. Several questions might be raised about the need for future training. Do low numbers of participants indicate a need for training or saturation? What are the relationships between training and perceived knowledge and skill?



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A CLOSER LOOK: TRAINING

Figure below shows the means, standard deviations and the range of percentages for each quartile regarding each training topic. Three states (Iowa, Wisconsin and Texas) ranked in the top quartile in at least seven of the eleven topics. All three states had top rankings in training in finding resources, empowering the community, using research-based information, and facilitating organizational change. Five states were in the bottom quartile in at least eight of the eleven topics. Regarding the sufficiency of training in each topic, little variation was noted, with most respondents indicating trainings to be adequate or very close to adequate.

PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING BY TOPIC AREA: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

Item	Bottom Quartile	Third Quartile	Second Quartile	Top Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
Finding Resources	21-40%	41-47%	48-55%	56-70%	46.95	11.59
Principles of Collaboration	32-51%	52-57%	58-64%	65-84%	57.00	11.21
Impact of Values	5-42%	43-46%	47-53%	54-80%	46.19	13.07
Vision and Purpose of CYFAR	11-23%	24-32%	33-39%	40-69%	32.95	11.90
Empowering Community	17-36%	37-41%	42-50%	51-66%	42.38	10.32
Research-Based Information	25-54%	55-64%	65-71%	72-83%	62.45	12.64
Recruiting Volunteers	23-35%	36-41%	42-49%	50-84%	42.71	12.47
Evaluation	26-47%	48-56%	57-64%	65-84%	55.62	14.34
Organizational Change	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	51-64%	40.52	11.33
Use of Computers	53-68%	69-74%	75-84%	85-94%	76.36	9.41
Electronic Communication	29-59%	60-70%	71-75%	76-86%	68.26	11.52

*Percent of respondents within each state who said they participate in each topic. State percentages are included in state reports.

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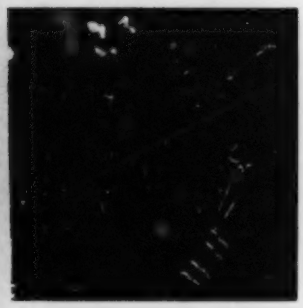
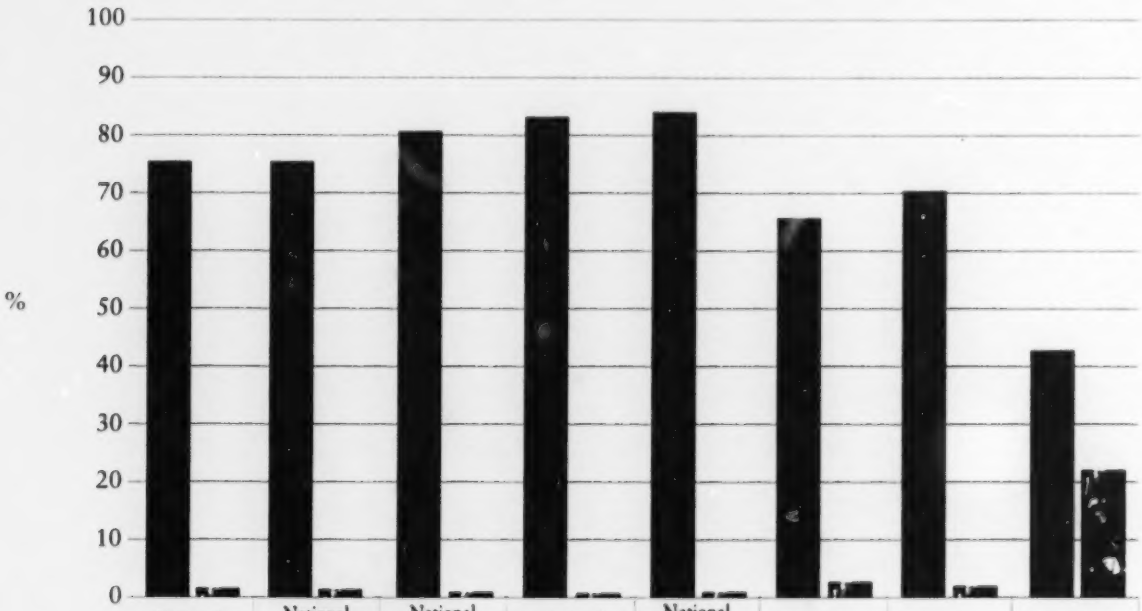
A CLOSER LOOK: INTERNET USE



Although the majority of respondents received training in the use of computers and the use of electronic communication (see Figure on pg. 18), very few reported using these resources. No differences were noted between respondents who report that they work at the state level and those of the total sample. Figure below presents the means of state averages of percent of respondents who reported they access each electronic resource never or once a week. Interestingly, "other" internet resources are used quite often in comparison to Extension resources. While this survey did not tap reasons for the use or non-use of these websites, we do know that 84% report they have a computer on their desk, 94% have access to e-mail, and 88% have access to the world wide web.

AVERAGE OF STATE MEAN PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS WHO REPORT THEY ACCESS ELECTRONIC RESOURCES "NEVER" OR "ONCE A WEEK"



	National Network for Child Care	National Network for Family Resiliency	National Network for Science and Technology	National Network for Collaboration	National Decisions for Health Network	CYFERNet	CYFAR home page	Other Internet Resources
NEVER	75.45	75.45	80.21	83.98	84.48	67.07	70.14	42.17
ONCE A WEEK	1.83	1.69	0.71	0.64	0.71	3.21	2.57	22.64

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3 COMPONENT

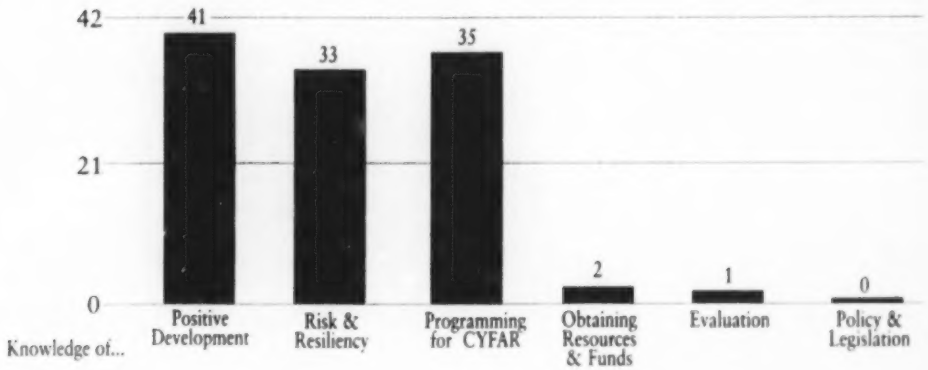
At the heart of Extension's capacity to support community-based programs is a group of committed professionals who are knowledgeable and skilled in serving children, youth and families at risk.

THIS COMPONENT WAS ADDRESSED BY NINE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. KNOWLEDGE OF PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT;
2. KNOWLEDGE OF RISK AND RESILIENCE FACTORS;
3. KNOWLEDGE OF PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK;
4. KNOWLEDGE OF OBTAINING RESOURCES AND FUNDS TO SUPPORT SUCH PROGRAMS;
5. KNOWLEDGE OF EVALUATING PROGRAMS;
6. KNOWLEDGE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION AS IT AFFECTS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK;
7. INVOLVEMENT IN EVALUATIONS THAT DEMONSTRATE OUTCOMES TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS;
8. WHETHER ONE OF THEIR ROLES IN EXTENSION IS TO EDUCATE POLICYMAKERS AND OTHER COMMUNITY LEADERS ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY ISSUES;
9. THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY ARE CALLED UPON FOR EXPERTISE IN WORKING WITH AND PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK.

EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS' KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY ISSUES IN DEVELOPING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS

Number of states in which half or more Extension professionals "agree" or "strongly agree"



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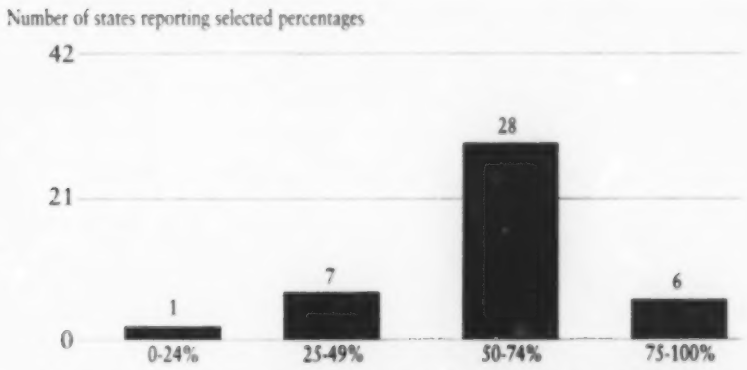
THE BIG PICTURE

Figure on previous page shows the number of states in which half or more Extension professionals reported "good" or "excellent" knowledge in six areas. The figure displays rather dramatically the areas in which Extension professionals are extremely knowledgeable and areas where future training and staff development may be needed. In most states, Extension professionals appear to be very knowledgeable of principles of positive development, risk and resilience factors, and programming for at-risk families. In contrast, most are much less knowledgeable about obtaining resources and funds to support programs, evaluation, and policy and legislation affecting lives of at-risk families.

Figure below indicates that Extension professionals across the country are indeed being recognized as critical resources in education for children, youth, family and community issues. In a majority of the states (34 out of 42 states), half or more respondents reported that they are called upon at least monthly for their expertise in such issues.

RESPONDENTS CALLED UPON AT LEAST MONTHLY FOR THEIR EXPERTISE IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK



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A CLOSER LOOK: KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY ISSUES

Table below shows the means, standard deviations and the range of percentages for each quartile. Extension professionals across the country are very knowledgable about issues pertinent to working with children, youth and families.

KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUES KEY TO PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

Item	Bottom Quartile	Third Quartile	Second Quartile	Top Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
Principles of Positive Development	46-74%	75-80%	81-85%	86-93%	8.90	9.20
Risk and Resilience Factors	24-51%	52-59%	60-65%	66-88%	58.74	12.24
Programming for At-Risk Audiences	24-52%	53-63%	64-66%	67-82%	60.19	10.66
Obtaining Resources and Funds to Support Programs	16-28%	29-31%	32-39%	40-52%	32.67	7.67
Called Upon at Least Monthly for Expertise	24-50%	51-58%	59-67%	68-85%	59.33	11.77

*Percent of respondents within each state who indicated "good" or "excellent" knowledge and were called upon at least monthly for their expertise. State percentages are included in state reports.

A majority of respondents within each state reported good or excellent knowledge of principles of positive development, risk and resilience factors, and programming for at-risk audiences. Even in the bottom quartile, up to 74% of respondents reported good or excellent knowledge. Extension professionals reported less confidence in their knowledge of how to obtain resources and funds to support programs for at-risk audiences. The national average for this question was 33%. When asked how frequently they were called upon for their expertise regarding children, youth and family issues, the state percentages of respondents reporting monthly or weekly ranged broadly from 24% to 85%. However, the average national percentage was 59%, suggesting that Extension professionals are being recognized for their expertise in these issues.

Two states (Wisconsin and Massachusetts) ranked in the top quartile in at least four of the five questions. Both states ranked in the top quartile in all four knowledge areas. Unfortunately, six states ranked in the bottom quartile in at least four of the five questions.

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A CLOSER LOOK: EVALUATING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK

Evaluation is seen as a critical knowledge area by the CYFAR Initiative and continues to be a key area of training and staff development across state Extension systems. As can be seen in the table below, future work may be needed in this area.

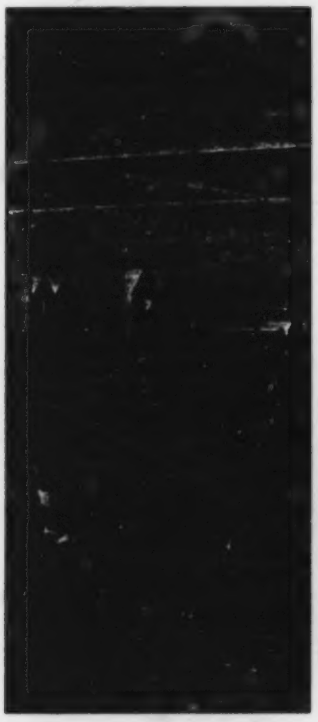
EVALUATION: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

Item	Bottom Quartile	Third Quartile	Second Quartile	Top Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
Knowledgeable About Evaluation	11-26%	27-33%	34-38%	39-54%	32.67	8.97
Currently Involved in Evaluation	18-33%	34-39%	40-48%	49-67%	40.83	11.05

*Percent of respondents within each state who indicated "good" or "excellent" knowledge and "agree" or "strongly agree" that they were involved in evaluation. State percentages are included in state reports.

Relatively few Extension professionals appear to be confident about their knowledge of evaluation. Only 11% to 26% of respondents in the bottom quartile and 39% to 54% in the top quartile reported good or excellent knowledge of evaluation. When asked if they were currently involved in evaluating programs for at-risk families, between 18% and 33% of respondents in the bottom quartile and between 49% and 67% in the top quartile agreed or strongly agreed that they are currently involved in such evaluation efforts.

Five states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Nevada and Wisconsin) ranked in the top quartile in both these questions. Four states ranked in the bottom quartile in both these questions. Generally speaking, states ranking in the upper quartile in knowledge of evaluation also ranked in the upper quartiles in whether they are currently involved in evaluations. Interestingly, many states ranking in the bottom quartile in knowledge of evaluation were in the top or second quartile in whether they are involved in evaluations.



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A CLOSER LOOK: KNOWLEDGE OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK

POLICY AND LEGISLATION: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

ITEM	BOTTOM QUARTILE	THIRD QUARTILE	SECOND QUARTILE	TOP QUARTILE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Knowledgeable About Policy and Legislation	8-20%	21-24%	25-28%	29-46%	24.21	7.51
Educating Policymakers is One of my Roles	51-67%	68-74%	75-79%	80-96%	73.95	9.05

*Percent of respondents within each state who indicated "good" or "excellent" knowledge and "agree" or "strongly agree" that it is one of their roles in Extension to educate policymakers. State percentages are included in state reports.

The results above indicate that Extension professionals were not at all confident about their knowledge of policy and legislation affecting lives of the children, youth and families they serve. However, the majority believe that it is one of their roles to educate policymakers and other community leaders on children, youth and families issues. These findings, which were consistent in every participating state, suggest a need for future work in this area.

Table above shows that between 8% and 46% of respondents across states reported good or excellent knowledge of policy and legislation affecting the lives of children, youth and families they serve. On the other hand, between 51% and 96% of respondents across states reported that one of their roles in Extension is to educate policymakers and other community leaders on children, youth and family issues. Three states (Arkansas, Louisiana and Wisconsin) ranked in the top quartile in both these questions. Four states ranked in the bottom quartile in both these questions. The quartile rankings were consistent for most states. If a state ranked in the upper two quartiles on one question, they generally ranked in the upper two quartiles on the other question.

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4 COMPONENT

Promote diversity, inclusivity and pluralism in Extension programs and staff

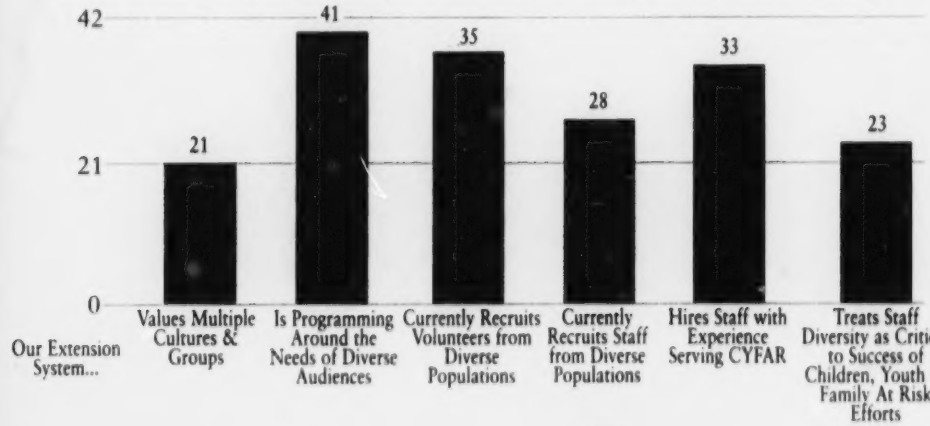
Component 4 of the CYFAR Initiative recognizes that diversity, inclusivity and pluralism in Extension programs and staff will likely lead to the best possible outcomes for children, youth and families they serve.

THIS COMPONENT WAS ADDRESSED BY TWELVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. THE CURRENT STATUS OF DIVERSITY IN THEIR STATE EXTENSION SYSTEM;
2. PLANNING PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF DIVERSE AUDIENCES;
3. RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM DIVERSE POPULATIONS;
4. RECRUITING STAFF FROM DIVERSE POPULATIONS;
5. HIRING STAFF WITH EXPERIENCE SERVING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT RISK;
6. TREATING STAFF DIVERSITY AS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS OF CYFAR EFFORTS;
7. WORK WITH DIVERSE ETHNIC POPULATIONS;
8. WORK WITH SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES;
9. WORK WITH LOW-INCOME FAMILIES;
10. WORK WITH PEOPLE AT RISK FOR PROBLEM BEHAVIOR;
11. WHETHER THEY FEEL SKILLED IN WORKING WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES;
12. WHETHER THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE WORKING WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES.

STATUS OF DIVERSITY AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL

Number of states in which half or more respondents reported positively to the following question on diversity



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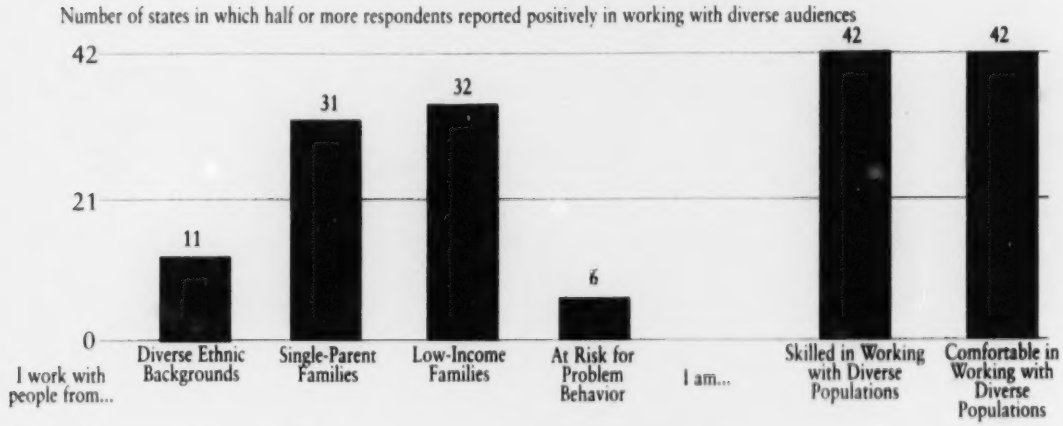
THE BIG PICTURE

While the status of diversity varied widely across participating states, the results suggest that nationally, Cooperative Extension is fairly active in incorporating diversity in their work with children, youth and families at risk. Figure on previous page shows the number of states in which half or more respondents reported positively to multiple questions about the status of diversity of their state Extension system. Impressively, in 41 of 42 states, half or more respondents agreed that their Extension system is currently programming around the needs of diverse audiences. In addition, half or more respondents in 23 to 35 states agreed that their Extension system is incorporating diversity in recruiting and hiring volunteers and staff.

Figure below shows the number of states in which half or more respondents work with four different populations. It also shows the number of states in which at least half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are skilled or comfortable working with diverse audiences. The results indicate that the majority of participating states are working much more with single-parent and low-income families (31 and 32 states, respectively) than with those from diverse ethnic backgrounds and those at risk for problem behavior (11 and 6 states, respectively). That every participating state had half or more respondents agreeing that they are both skilled and comfortable working with diverse audiences reflects very positively on the Cooperative Extension System and lays a solid foundation for improving Extension's work with diverse populations.

WORKING WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES



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A CLOSER LOOK: THE STATUS OF DIVERSITY

STATUS OF DIVERSITY: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

Item	Bottom Quartile	Third Quartile	Second Quartile	Top Quartile	Mean	Standard Deviation
General Status of Diversity	28-43%	44-49%	50-58%	59-80%	49.98	10.60
Programming Around Needs of Diverse Audiences	33-68%	69-77%	78-81%	82-89%	73.62	11.48

*Percent of respondents within each state who indicated at least a "4" on a continuum from 1 to 5 measuring the status of diversity and "agree" or "strongly agree" that their state is currently programming for diverse audiences. State percentages are included in state reports.

When asked about the status of diversity in their Extension system, 28% to 43% of respondents in the bottom quartile and 59% to 80% of respondents in the top quartile reported that their system values multiple cultures and groups. Exactly half the participating states had at least half their respective respondents indicate that their system values multiple cultures and groups.

Extension professionals overwhelmingly agreed that their Extension system is currently programming around the needs of diverse audiences. Even in the bottom quartile, up to 68% of the respondents agreed that their state is currently addressing needs of diverse audiences. In the top quartile, an impressive 82% to 89% of respondents agreed that their state is meeting the needs of diverse audiences. Four states (Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin) were in the top quartile in both these questions, while five states ranked in the bottom quartile.

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A CLOSER LOOK: DIVERSITY IN HIRING AND RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

RECRUITING AND HIRING VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF FROM DIVERSE AUDIENCES: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

ITEM	BOTTOM QUARTILE	THIRD QUARTILE	SECOND QUARTILE	TOP QUARTILE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Recruits Volunteers from Diverse Populations	35-54%	55-64%	65-70%	71-79%	62.14	11.31
Recruits Staff from Diverse Populations	35-44%	45-54%	55-60%	61-76%	53.21	10.12
Hires Staff with Experience Serving CYFAR	31-51%	52-59%	60-66%	67-78%	58.17	10.18
Diversity of Staff Seen as Critical	28-46%	47-51%	52-58%	59-70%	50.74	9.96

*Percent of respondents within each state who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statements. State percentages are included in state reports.

Table above indicates that on average, most states are recruiting both volunteers (62%) and staff (53%) from diverse populations. Respondents in nearly every state reported that their system is doing more to recruit volunteers than staff from diverse populations. This is congruent with the responses to questions about recruitment of staff and volunteers in an ideal system. In a majority of states (33 of 42), at least half the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Extension system hires staff with experience serving children, youth and families at risk.

Two states (Arizona and Wisconsin) ranked in the top quartile in at least three of the four items. Both these states also ranked in the top quartile for recruiting volunteers and staff from diverse audiences and hiring professionals with experience serving children, youth and families at risk. Both ranked in the second or top quartile in whether staff diversity is seen as critical in the Extension System. In contrast, seven states ranked consistently low in at least three of the four items. Six of the seven were ranked in the bottom quartile for both recruiting volunteers and recruiting staff from diverse audiences.

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A CLOSER LOOK: RESPONDENTS' OWN WORK WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES

WORK WITH DIVERSE AUDIENCES: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

ITEM	BOTTOM QUARTILE	THIRD QUARTILE	SECOND QUARTILE	TOP QUARTILE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
People from Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds	12-27%	28-40%	41-56%	57-87%	42.00	18.87
People from Single -Parent Families	36-48%	49-58%	59-64%	65-79%	56.50	10.86
People in Low-Income Families	25-52%	53-62%	63-65%	66-92%	59.64	13.52
People At Risk for Problem-Behavior	17-31%	32-38%	39-42%	43-66%	38.33	10.78
Skilled in Working with Diverse Audiences	39-63%	64-68%	69-77%	78-92%	69.79	11.05
Comfortable Working with Diverse Audiences	67-81%	82-86%	87-90%	91-100%	85.40	7.70

*Percent of respondents within each state who indicated at least a "4" on a continuum from 1=none to 5=a lot the extent to which they work with different populations and those who "agree" or " strongly agree" on their skill and comfort levels. State percentages are included in state reports.

With few exceptions, Extension professionals reported working extensively with people in low-income families and single-parent families. Relatively fewer respondents reported working extensively with people from diverse ethnic groups and people at risk for problem behavior.

Results above suggest that respondents across states are both skilled and comfortable working with diverse audiences. Between, 39% and 63% in the bottom quartile and between 78% and 92% in the top quartile agreed that they were skilled in working with diverse audiences. An impressive 67% to 81% of respondents in the bottom quartile and 91% to 100% in the top quartile agreed that they were comfortable working with such audiences.

Six states (Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana and Puerto Rico) ranked in the top quartile in at least four of the six questions. All six ranked in the top quartiles on questions about skill and comfort levels working with diverse audiences. These states were generally in the top two quartiles on the remaining questions. Six states ranked in the bottom quartile in at least four of the six questions. These states ranked in the third or bottom quartile on all questions but those regarding comfort level in working with diverse audiences.

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Components 5 and 6 of the CYFAR Initiative acknowledge that collaborations of professionals both within and outside Extension are critical to strengthening programs and policy for children, youth and families. Because of this commonality, results for these two components are addressed together.

THIS COMPONENT WAS ADDRESSED BY NINE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

1. SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM CAMPUS-BASED FACULTY;
2. WORK WITH OTHER EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS IMPROVING PROGRAMS FOR AT-RISK AUDIENCES;
3. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COMMUNITY, STATE AND FEDERAL ORGANIZATIONS ENHANCING EXPERIENCE AND CREDIBILITY IN WORK WITH AT-RISK AUDIENCES;
4. COLLABORATION BEING WORTH THE EFFORT;
5. ENGAGING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN THEIR COMMUNITY;
6. PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY TASK FORCES WORKING ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY ISSUES;
7. WORK WITH OUTSIDE GROUPS INFLUENCING HOW EXTENSION WORKS WITH AT-RISK CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES;
8. PROVISION OF RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ENGAGE IN COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS;
9. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH VARIOUS PROFESSIONALS.

THE BIG PICTURE

Figure that follows displays the number of states in which half or more Extension professionals agreed or strongly agreed with each of eight items regarding work with others. Half or more respondents in 24 of the 42 states agreed or strongly agreed that they receive support from campus-based faculty. In nearly all states (41 of 42), half or more respondents agreed that working with other Extension professionals has improved their programs for at-risk audiences. In all 42 states, at least half the respondents agreed with the following: collaboration with other community, state and federal organizations enhances their experience and credibility in work with at-risk audiences, collaboration is worth the effort; engage program participants in identifying and addressing the needs of children, youth and families in their community; participate in community task forces working on children, youth and family issues; and work with outside groups influences how Extension works with at-risk children, youth and families. While most agree that working with others is critical in serving children, youth and families at risk, in only 2 of the 42 states did half or more respondents agree that they are provided the resources (time and money) necessary to engage in collaborative efforts.

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5 COMPONENT

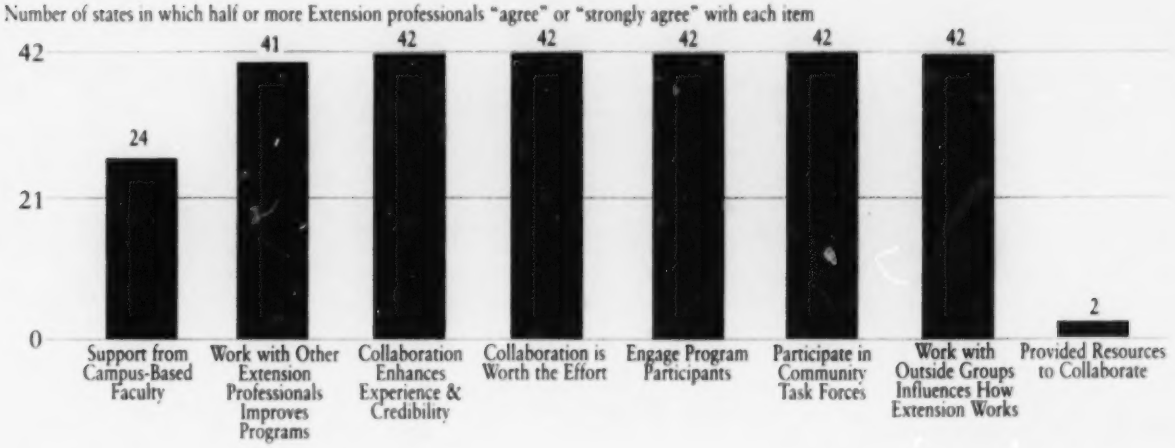
P

6 COMPONENT

P

WORK WITH OTHERS

Number of states in which half or more Extension professionals "agree" or "strongly agree" with each item



A CLOSER LOOK: WORK WITH OTHERS

WORK WITH OTHERS: QUARTILE RANGES OF STATE PERCENTAGES*

ITEM	BOTTOM QUARTILE	THIRD QUARTILE	SECOND QUARTILE	TOP QUARTILE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Receive Support from Campus-Based Faculty	12-36%	37-51%	52-67%	68-87%	51.76	18.58
Work with Other Extension Professionals has Improved Programs	46-72%	73-78%	79-84%	85-93%	77.07	9.80
Collaboration Enhances Experience and Credibility	67-76%	77-84%	85-89%	90-95%	82.90	7.39
Collaboration is Worth the Effort	66-79%	80-84%	85-88%	89-93%	83.19	6.56
Engage Program Participants	51-65%	66-70%	71-76%	77-94%	70.50	8.82
Participation in Community Task Forces	60-74%	75-80%	81-84%	85-94%	78.67	8.50
Work with Outside Groups Influences Extension Work	60-77%	78-83%	84-87%	88-96%	81.43	7.62
Provision of Resources Necessary to Collaborate	16-27%	28-36%	37-41%	41-60%	34.76	9.76

*Percent of respondents within each state who "agree" or "strongly agree" with each item. State percentages are included in state reports.

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Most respondents agree that working with others is important (see Table on previous page). With the exception of support from campus-based faculty and the provision of resources necessary for collaboration, the state percentages for the remaining items ranged from approximately 50% to over 90%, with the lowest national average being 71%. There was a wide range of responses on the issue of support from campus-based faculty, as state percentages ranged from 12% to 87%. The national average was 52%. States also showed variability in the number of respondents who agreed that they are provided the resources (time and money) necessary to engage in collaborative efforts. State percentages ranged from 16% to 60%, with a national average of 35%.

An examination of the quartile rankings showed that two states (North Carolina and Wisconsin) consistently ranked in the top quartile in seven of the eight questions. Neither ranked in the third or bottom quartiles on any question. In contrast, four states consistently ranked in the bottom quartile on five items. These four states were also in the third or bottom quartiles on the remaining three items.

A CLOSER LOOK: THE COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

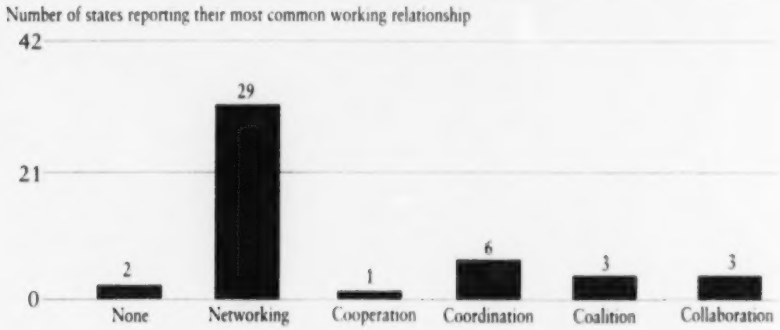
Several questions in Components 5 and 6 asked respondents about the extent to which they have built a relationship with other professionals, including Extension professionals from other counties, Extension professionals from other program areas (e.g., Agriculture, 4-H Youth Development, Family and Consumer Sciences), Extension professionals at the state level, community agencies and organizations, state agencies and organizations, and federal agencies and organizations. Response categories were adapted from the Collaboration Framework developed by the National Network for Collaboration. These categories and a brief description of each follows:

- NONE: no working relationship;
- NETWORKING: establish dialogue and common understanding;
- COOPERATION: match needs and coordinate efforts to avoid duplicating services;
- COORDINATION: share or merge resources to address common issues or to create something new;
- COALITION: share ideas, leadership and resources over several years;
- COLLABORATION: build an interdependent system to accomplish shared vision and outcomes.

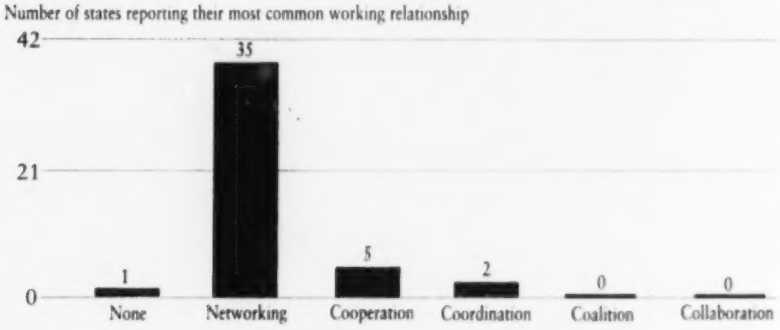
It is important to note that while these categories are hierarchical in nature (i.e., increasingly intensive working relationships), they do not necessarily imply that the more intensive levels are always more desirable or appropriate.

Component 5 focuses on collaborations of professionals within Extension. Across states, a general trend emerged (see Figures below). Networking was the most common working relationship with Extension professionals from other counties (29 states), with Extension professionals from other program areas (35 states), and with Extension professionals at the state level (34 states). However, in approximately one-fourth of the states, a more intensive working relationship was mentioned as most common with these groups of professionals.

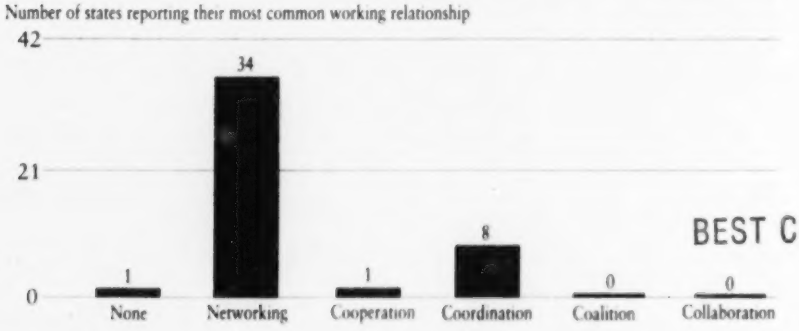
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS FROM OTHER COUNTIES



WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS FROM OTHER PROGRAM AREAS



WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS AT THE STATE LEVEL



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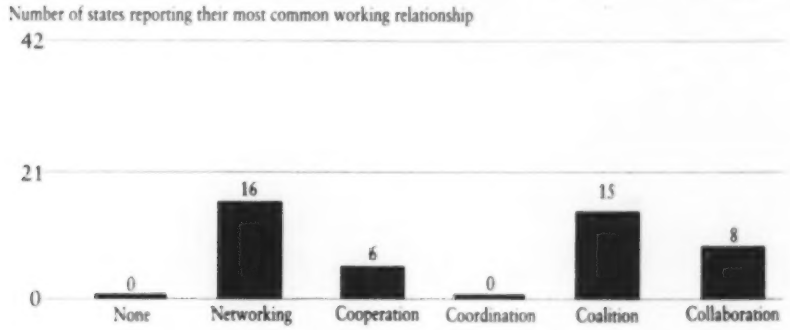
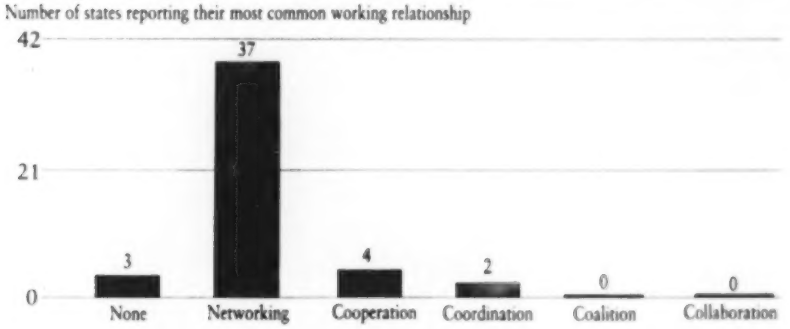
Component 6 focuses on collaborations with professionals outside Extension – community, state and federal agencies and organizations. The most common working relationship varied by level of organization (see Figures below). An approximately equal number reported networking (16 states) or coalition (15 states) with community agencies. Networking was overwhelmingly listed as the most common relationship with state organizations (37 states). Most respondents indicated that they had no relationship with federal agencies (29 states).

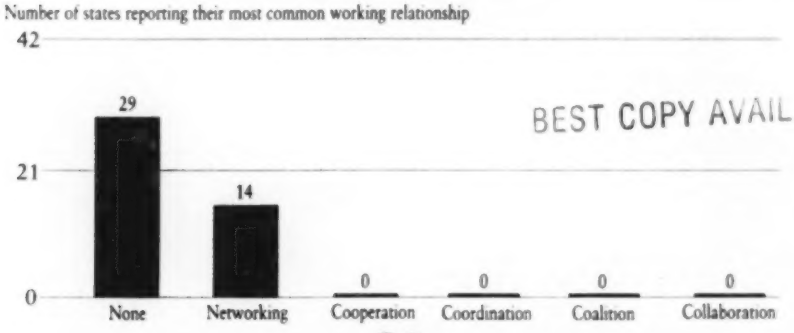
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS



WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS



WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS



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As expected, respondents worked the least intensively with Extension and non-Extension professionals at state or federal levels and were more involved with those at a community level. Extension professionals worked more intensively with community agencies and organizations than they did with Extension professionals from other counties. Respondents were also asked to indicate the types of working relationships they ideally would like to have with these six groups. Most indicated that in an ideal system they would work more intensively with others.

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CONCLUSIONS

An important part of the Children, Youth and Families At Risk Initiative involves empowering states and counties in their efforts to more effectively reach children, youth and families at risk. System-wide changes are expected to result in improved statewide capacity to support community-based programs for at-risk audiences. Three states are doing an exemplary job in demonstrating organizational capacity and support for this type of programming, as measured by this survey. Wisconsin consistently ranked in the top quartiles across the six components. Delaware and North Carolina ranked consistently in the top two quartiles.

While we acknowledge that these conclusions are based only upon survey data, the self-reported behaviors and beliefs of Extension staff in these states lead us to believe that they work in environments in which they know where they are headed and have a plan to get there. They receive good training, support and rewards. They are recognized as important resources in the community. Diversity is valued in their organizations, and they collaborate with internal and external partners.

Social exchange theory as applied to groups within an organization suggests that groups respond to change in terms of perceptions of power, advantage and disadvantage (Carnall, 1986). As measured by this survey, professional groups in Wisconsin, Delaware and North Carolina perceive that they are at an advantage in their systems for their willingness to work with at-risk audiences. As Extension has expanded its niche, these states appear to have responded in ways that have promoted the development of their professional staffs to support and be supported by the state organization.

Perhaps the most important result of this survey is the very positive picture of organizational learning that is taking place in Extension across all states. The mechanisms and procedures that give the organization structure and the shared professional values, leadership and vision that establish the organizational culture are all engaged in various degrees of change and learning. In every state, there was a gap between what the system is doing and what it should do. The discrepancies between the current and ideal status for all six organizational components reveal strong support for strengthening this system in working with children, youth and families at risk.

SURVEY QUALITY: VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

When examining the results of an evaluation, it is always important to ask "How accurate is the information that was obtained?" Validity and reliability refer to the "quality" of your survey. The quality of the Organizational Change Survey is reflected in the variability and consistency in the data that allowed us to find meaningful patterns both within and across state Extension systems. For example, we were able to identify those state Extension systems doing consistently well working with children, youth and families at risk. We were also able to uncover strengths and weaknesses of the Extension system in serving at-risk populations. The following examines strategies adopted to increase the validity and reliability of the Organizational Change Survey information.

The assumption upon which the survey and report are based is that Extension will better support community-based programs for children, youth and families at risk when: personnel have a vision and plan for programming; staff and volunteers are trained, supported and rewarded appropriately; Extension professionals are viewed as critical resources in research and education; diversity, inclusivity and pluralism are valued; staff collaborate with their colleagues in Extension and the University; and also collaborate with others in the community, county, state and nation. These six organizational components, included in the State Strengthening request for applications, laid the foundation for Extension professionals' work as they carried out the program-level goals of the CYFAR Initiative.

Thus, our first concern around validity was to address the question "Are we measuring what we intend to measure?" In other words, will the information gathered from the Organizational Change Survey allow us to see how Extension is doing relative to the six organizational components? Several steps were followed to address this validity issue and other important issues such as whether the questions in the survey have only one interpretation (Cook & Campbell, 1976) and make conceptual sense (Patton, 1986). First, a list of questions adapted from the National 4-H Council's Strengthening Our Capacity to Care (SOCC) national survey was sent to the 15 members of the State Strengthening Organizational Work Group (SSOWG). The members, representing eight universities, USDA/CSREES, local county Extension programs and the National 4-H Council, were asked to categorize the items according to the six organizational components, determine which items were essential and determine gaps in addressing each outcome. SSOWG members then met to reach consensus on the selected items as well as discuss survey methods and procedures. Following these meetings, a draft

of the survey was developed and sent out to the SSOWG for commentary and revision. The revised draft was then piloted with a small sample in Arizona. Finally, two members of the SSOWG were selected to provide feedback on the final survey items.

The question of validity was particularly critical for the national report because data from individuals was used to understand organizations. Thus, our level of measurement (the individual) is not the same as our level of analysis (Extension). This method can create a problem known as "the fallacy of the wrong level" (Rousseau, 1985). For example, the fallacy of the wrong level would occur if we used one Extension director's responses to represent the entire Extension system. This threat to validity was minimized by aggregating data across individuals, reducing potential individual biases. Particular attention was paid to examining the system rather than how the individuals were doing within the system at every step of the survey process (i.e., designing the survey, establishing validity, analyzing data and reporting results).

Another potential threat to validity in survey research is social desirability bias. This occurs when respondents "answer questions in a way that conforms to dominant belief patterns among groups to which the respondent feels some identification or allegiance" (Dillman, 1978, p.62). To minimize such bias, we worked to insure respondent confidentiality. Each state selected a contact person who assigned a code number to all those eligible to participate in the survey. Completed surveys with the appropriate codes, not the names of the respondents, were then sent directly to Arizona for analysis. Thus, at no time did any individual have access to both survey responses and names of the individuals corresponding to their code numbers. It is also important to note that surveys, as opposed to interviews, provide an additional level of anonymity, and therefore, generally produce the most honest responses (Hochstim, 1967; as cited in Dillman, 1978).

Nonresponse bias can also be problematic for survey research. Nonresponse bias occurs when those who do not respond to a survey differ greatly from those who do respond. If such a bias exists, then the results of the survey are misleading since they only represent those unique individuals who answered the survey and not the broader population initially targeted. One way to decrease nonresponse bias is to increase response rates. To accomplish this, we utilized Dillman's (1978) Total Design Method as a framework for developing and implementing surveys. Among other techniques, this method makes use of mailings which both inform potential respondents of forthcoming surveys and remind them to answer and send in the survey materials. This method yielded state

response rates from 70% to 99%, which meet established standards of "very good" response rates (Babbie, 1973; as cited in Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997).

One final problem arising from the aggregation of data is aggregation bias (Rousseau, 1985). Aggregation bias exists when relationships proposed by the data are simply an artifact of the way the data were combined. For example, higher correlations exist between groups selected from the same department on a particular variable than their individual-level counterparts. The current evaluation was able to minimize this problem by identifying a wide range of Extension employees as eligible respondents including community-based staff, agents, specialists and administrators. Thus, multiple and varied perspectives were examined instead of those from a single homogeneous group.

Reliability is concerned with issues of stability and consistency of results. A reliable survey will produce consistent results despite random fluctuations in the survey implementation process (e.g., changes in respondents' moods, time of day the survey was administered). Thus, a reliable survey insures that differences resulting from repeated administrations (if administered to the same population to measure the same characteristics) are due to real changes rather than due to error or random fluctuations.

While there are many ways to assess reliability, the type of reliability analysis appropriate for most survey data is called internal consistency reliability which estimates how consistently the items within a dimension (such as organizational status regarding diversity) measure the same characteristic (Edwards et al., 1997). Internal consistency reliability values can range from .00 to 1.00 with .70 or greater considered acceptable (Edwards et al., 1997).

Internal consistency reliability was less of an issue in this evaluation because we were interested in the responses to each item. However, within each component we also reported trends across conceptually linked items; thus, internal consistency reliabilities were calculated for these items. These analyses resulted in internal consistency values between .44 and .94. If you recall, values of .70 and higher are considered acceptable. The dimensions yielding the low values in this report were evaluation and policy and legislation. These values suggest that there is little relationship between the items "having knowledge of evaluation"

and "current involvement in evaluations." Similarly, there is little relationship between the items "having knowledge of policy and legislation affecting the lives of at-risk audiences" and "one role in Extension is to educate policymakers on such issues." Indeed, our discussions of quartile rankings alluded to such inconsistencies.

Given the practical nature of the current survey, it should be stressed that issues of validity and reliability are simply means to ends. The more valid question is "How is the information gathered from this survey going to be used?" Our interest in general trends rather than absolute percentages allowed us to better interpret implications of the results for both Extension and the communities we serve. Ultimately, it is the application of such information and openness to change that lie at the heart of Extension's ability to face the issues challenging children, youth and families in the years to come.

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